



SUZAN PITT AND JIM TRAINOR:
A CONVERSATION IN LIGHT AND DARKNESS

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8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

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California Institute of the Arts

CaLARTS

SUZAN PITT AND JIM TRAINOR: A CONVERSATION IN LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Tue Nov 1 | 8:30 pm
Jack H. Skirball Series

Suzan Pitt and Jim Trainor have brought the art of animation to new levels of artistic maturity and depth, and their films entertain haunting correspondences with each other. Pitt's *Visitation* (2011, 16mm) allows a glimpse into the strange and surrealist aura of "an outer-world night." Her earlier *El Doctor* (2006, 35mm), which takes place in crumbling Mexican hospital, is a visual poem traveling between desperation and dark comedy. In Alpert Award winner Jim Trainor's *The Presentation Theme* (2008), a Peruvian prisoner of war is outmaneuvered by a blood-drinking priestess. Also by Trainor: *Harmony* (2004), about animal and human guilt; *The Magic Kingdom* (2002), imagined in a blue-green jungle; and *The Moschops* (2000), a rueful account of faux prehistoric creatures.

In person: Suzan Pitt, Jim Trainor

"[Pitt's] animation is a visual orgy... The experience of her work is of overwhelming generosity. She strips herself bare and gives her viewers a look directly into her very soul. She is sensuous, erotic, bold, brilliant, bizarre, adventurous, honest, candid and consumed with the creative process. Her art is a luscious ice cream cone dripping with despair, surreality, hope and redemption."
—*Animation Nation*

"A quirky, original vision of human and animal nature.... Trainor's lines and shapes don't simply waver—they pulsate." Heads and bodies change shape as if they were ready to burst in some kind of growth spurt. Creatures appear always on the point of charging forward – or defecating, as they often do. Even a momentary change in the thickness of a line seems to signal a possible moment of growth, movement, or collapse." —Fred Camper, *Chicago Reader*

PROGRAM

Jim Trainor: *The Moschops*

13 min., 16mm, 2000

A prehistoric mammal-like reptile bleeds to death in a mud puddle.

Jim Trainor: *The Magic Kingdom*

7 min., 16mm, 2002

In a blue-green jungle with humankind's closest kin, *The Magic Kingdom* intersperses footage of creatures in artificial zoo landscapes with what may be animated diagrams of their souls.

Jim Trainor: *Harmony*

12 min., 16mm, 2004

The film presents ten vignettes of animals and people wracked with guilt over broken taboos.

Jim Trainor: *The Presentation Theme*

14 min. 2008

A Peruvian prisoner of war is outmaneuvered by a blood-drinking priestess.

Suzan Pitt: *El Doctor*
23 min., 35mm, 2006

El Doctor takes place in a crumbling hospital at the turn of the century in Mexico, inhabited by surreal characters. The Doctor in charge prefers to drink, while The Saint of Holes and a mysterious Gargoyle rearrange the Doctor's fated demise and send him on a journey of altered perspective. Directed and designed by Suzan Pitt, *El Doctor* is based on a script written by Blue Kraning (*Fear Itself*); it includes animation by Maria Vasilkovsky, Rinat Gazinov, and Gérard Goulet (*The Triplets of Belleville*), sand animation by Ben Zekowicz, direct paint-on-film animation by Naomi Uman (present at REDCAT on December 12) and sound design by David Slusser (PIXAR studios). Taking over five years to complete, the film is entirely hand painted by a small group of artists in Los Angeles and Mexico.

Suzan Pitt: *Visitation*
8.9 min., 16mm, 2011

West Coast premiere

Cast in grainy black and white 16mm surrealistic images, *Visitation* allows an imaginary glimpse into the aura of "an outer-world night..." *My mood at the time had served to aggravate those deeply inhuman and most terrible beings when they came with total abandonment from where they had lurked amongst the stones and wet woods...* With these lines, *Visitation* unwinds through a hand painted heavenly hell of unending life and death. Steeped in the alchemical and inner dream life it explores a landscape of gothic figures that enact evolving metaphysical dramas.

Using painted cut-outs and early cinema techniques (multiple passes, mattes, multi-plane levels, in-camera superimpositions, shutter manipulation, etc.), *Visitation* was shot with a 16mm Bolex camera on black and white film for a grainy handmade look. The abstract sequences were created by placing objects directly onto raw film and then exposed with a flashlight. The film's process mirrors the alchemical nature of chemical, material, and metaphysical experimentation. It was animated in Suzan Pitt's LA studio.

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Suzan Pitt's paintings and animated films have won numerous prizes worldwide, starting with *Asparagus* (1979) which showed with David Lynch's *Eraserhead* for two years on the Midnight Movie circuit. Shown in more than 20 film festivals worldwide, it won first prize at the Atlanta Film Festival and the Oberhausen Short Film Festival along with the International Critic's Prize. Suzan Pitt's works have pushed the boundaries of the animated film form, thriving in the art world as well as television, theatrical, and festival venues. She has had major exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of Art, the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York, and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In Germany, she designed the first two operas to include animated images for the stage (*Damnation of Faust*, and *The Magic Flute*). In addition, Pitt has created two large multi-media shows at the Venice Biennale and at Harvard University. Pitt is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fulbright Scholar Award, three National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a Rockefeller Fellowship. Suzan Pitt teaches in the School of Film/Video at the California Institute of the Arts.

Jim Trainor (b. 1961) has been making animated films since he was thirteen. Since that time, his medium has changed little - his preferred technique remains using a black magic marker on typing paper and shooting the results on 16mm film. Born in Philadelphia, he grew up in suburban Washington DC. He majored in English Literature at Columbia University from 1979 to 1983 and then lived in New York City until accepting a teaching position at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Trainor's *The Fetishist* (1997) took him eleven years to make and is a highly unpleasant, though perhaps not in the way one may expect, portrait of a serial killer. A series of films about animals - *The Bats*, *The Moschops*, *The Magic Kingdom* and *Harmony* - followed, and have been widely screened, sometimes under the collective title *The Animals and Their Limitations*. He is currently at work on a new series, *Nascent Humanity*, of which *The Presentation Theme* (2008) is the first, to be followed by a long, meandering film (as yet untitled) about the sun and moon myths of a headhunting culture. He is planning his first live-action dramatic movie, *The Pink Egg*, based on the lives of parasitic wasps. Beyond filmmaking, his passions include looking closely at birds and insects and reading forgotten anthropology books of the 1920s. Jim Trainor is the 2010 Film/Video Recipient of the Alpert Award.

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

The Jack H. Skirball Series is supported in part by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT FALL 2011

Mon-Tue Nov 14-15

Two Nights with Ernie Gehr:

Early Films (Nov 15) and New Digital Works (Nov 14)

Mon Nov 21

Collapse Into Image

Curated by Madison Brookshire

Mon Dec 12

Naomi Uman

***The Ukrainian Time Machine* - Fragments from a Diary**

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